

Amendments to the Claims:

1-2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) A method for controlling a process flow, comprising:

determining a plurality of ideal characteristic variables for the process flow that describe a sub-aspect of the process flow;

identifying trends for each sub-aspect based on the plurality of ideal characteristic variables; and

choosing a future point in time;

defining a desired target at the future point in time for each sub-aspect based on the identified trends;

storing the plurality of ideal characteristic variables that describe a sub-aspect of the process flow, and the desired target at the future point in time for each sub-aspect, in an electronic storage area;

determining actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects of the process flow at an observation time point and the actual state of the process flow in the observation time period is described by the actual characteristic variables;

deriving values for the actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects at the future point in time based on the actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects at the observation point in time;

calculating a plurality of deviations of the actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects from the corresponding ideal characteristic variables of the sub-aspects up to the future point in time ~~with the changes over time of the actual characteristic variables being included,~~ using a calculation module;

representing the ideal characteristic variables of each sub-aspect as an optimum point in a center area of a display field of a visualization system and the actual characteristic variables of each sub-aspect are shown as an actual point at a distance from the optimum point and the actual points are graphically connected by connecting lines so that the area enclosed by the connecting lines is a measure of the quality of the process flow in the observation period; and

displaying a means for correcting deviations of actual characteristic variables of a sub-aspect from the ideal characteristic variables of a sub-aspect upon selection of the sub-aspect.

4. (currently amended) A device for a process flow by a data processing system, comprising:

computer readable media comprising computer readable code that, when read by a computer, enables an electronic storage area to store a plurality of ideal characteristic variables that describe a sub-aspect of the process flow and a desired target process flow defined by the ideal characteristic variables;

computer readable media comprising computer readable code that, when read by a computer, enables a calculation module to identify trends for each sub-aspect based on the plurality of ideal characteristic variables, allow a user to select a future point in time, and define a desired target at the future point in time based on the identified trends; determine the actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects of the process flow in an observation time period during the process flow and an actual state of the process flow in the observation time period is described by the actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects; derive values for the actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects at the future point in time based on the actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects in the observation time period; and calculate the deviations of the actual characteristic variables of the sub-aspects from the corresponding ideal characteristic variables of the sub-aspects up to the future point in time;

computer readable media comprising computer readable code that, when read by a computer, enables a visualization system to represent the ideal characteristic variables of sub-aspect as an optimum point in a central area of a display field of the visualization system and the actual characteristic variables of each sub-aspect is represented as an actual point at a distance from the optimum point such that the relation to the deviation of the corresponding actual characteristic variable from the corresponding ideal characteristic variable are represented as actual points being graphically connected by connecting lines to create an area enclosed by the connecting lines is a measure of the quality of the process flow in the observation time period, and further comprising instructions that enable the visualization system to display data related to a respective sub-aspect in response to a selection of a respective sub-aspect; and

computer readable media comprising computer readable code that, when read by a computer, enables an interface to permit a user to select a sub-aspect; and

5. (previously presented) The device for a process flow by a data processing system of claim 4, wherein the data related to a respective sub-aspect comprises a message suggesting a way to correct the deviation of the selected sub-aspect.

6. (previously presented) The device for a process flow by a data processing system of claim 4, wherein displaying data related to a selected sub-aspect comprises displaying an adjustable control for the selected sub-aspect, and the device further comprises computer readable media comprising computer readable code that when read by a computer enables an interface to permit a user to adjust the adjustable control, and the device further comprises computer readable media comprising computer readable code that, when read by a computer, enable a controller to control a sub-aspect in response to an adjustment of the adjustable control.

7. (previously presented) The method for controlling a process flow of claim 3, wherein displaying a means for correcting deviations of actual characteristics of variables of a sub-aspect from the ideal characteristic variables of a sub-aspect upon selection of the sub-aspect comprises displaying a message suggesting a way to correct the deviation of the respective sub-aspect.

8. (previously presented) The method for controlling a process flow of claim 3, wherein displaying a means for correcting deviations of actual characteristics of variables of a sub-aspect from the ideal characteristic variables of a sub-aspect upon selection of the sub-aspect comprises displaying an adjustable control for the selected sub-aspect, and the method for controlling a process flow further comprises adjusting the adjustable control to adjust the sub-aspect.